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SUBJECT: UAEG ANNOUNCES FNC ELECTION GUIDELINES

REF: ABU DHABI 2655

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) On September 13, Minister of State for Federal National Council(FNC) Affairs, Dr. Anwar Gargash, announced the establishment of the "electoral college" for the country's first FNC "election." The announcement was front page in all UAE papers. The college, consisting of more than 6,000 members, has over 1,000 women members, and will begin meeting the week of September 17 in preparation for the limited election expected in December. Gargash also announced the National Election Committee's(NEC) executive instructions for polling procedures, candidacy eligibility, and campaign finance regulations. Under the announced regulations, if any member of the electoral college is a civil servant or member of the military and wants to run for an FNC position, he/she must take a two-month leave of absence prior to the election. Candidates for the FNC who are members of the judiciary must resign from their post prior to campaigning. Campaign expenditures are limited to AED 2 million (USD 545,000) and may not include public funds, or donations from abroad.

¶2. (C) During a September 4 lunch with PolChief, Gargash stated that these "elections" should not be misinterpreted as a rush towards democracy, but should be seen simply as the introduction of democratic "elements" as a way to develop a political culture in the UAE without introducing the "destabilizing influences" he said were evident in recent popular elections elsewhere in the region. (Note: These comments mirror what Gargash told Ambassador reftel, in which he emphasized that political stability provides the foundation for the UAE's economic success and will continue to be a priority for the UAEG. End Note.)

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